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WASHINGTON, D.C. - U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon announced today that two provisions supporting south Louisiana project were included in the Manager's Amendment to a major water projects bill the House will be voting on as early as Thursday. The bill, entitled the Water Resources Development Act of 2007, authorizes numerous hurricane and flood control projects for Louisiana, including the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane and storm protection system and the comprehensive Louisiana Coastal Area coastal restoration study and projects. WRDA also de-authorizes the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet (MRGO), requiring the Army Corps of Engineers to permanently close the waterway that has been blamed for increasing Hurricane Katrina's storm surge that flooded St. Bernard Parish.

"Critical water projects in south Louisiana have been stalled for years because past Congresses haven't been able to agree on a WRDA bill," said Rep. Melancon. **"This year, things are different, and we are moving forward with passing a WRDA bill that makes hurricane protection and coastal restoration in Louisiana a major federal priority. I will continue working to make sure WRDA passes Congress quickly so we can get the ball rolling on Morganza, MRGO's closure, and a comprehensive coastal restoration effort."**

At the request of Rep. Melancon, WRDA's chief sponsor, House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman James Oberstar, included several provisions benefiting south Louisiana in his Manager's Amendment. Specifically, the amendment includes language drafted by Rep. Melancon to require that the federal government cover the future cost of operating and maintaining the locks and floodgates that will be built as part of the Morganza to the Gulf hurricane and storm protection system.

Furthermore, the amendment also includes Rep. Melancon's provision to assist the Port of Terrebonne with its efforts to secure federal assistance with improving the Houma Navigation Canal, in accordance with efforts to provide comprehensive hurricane and flood protection for Houma and surrounding communities. Currently, the Corps of Engineers is conducting a feasibility study to determine the national economic development benefits associated with improving the Canal. The Melancon provision requires the Corps to evaluate the predicted increase in contracts for new energy exploration and contracts for the fabrication of energy

infrastructure when calculating the economic benefits that would result from carrying out the project. Typically, these contracts are not included in the Corps' feasibility studies, putting Louisiana's offshore oil and gas fabrication ports, like the Port of Terrebonne, at a disadvantage.

Rep. Melancon added, "I am pleased Chairman Oberstar agreed with me that maintaining Morganza should be a federal responsibility. As I told him in my request, the people of Terrebonne and south Lafourche want and need hurricane and flood protection so desperately that they've been taxing themselves for years to pay for their share of Morganza and the existing hurricane protection system. They don't deserve the additional burden of maintaining the system after it's finally completed."

"I am also grateful we see eye-to-eye on the Houma Navigational Canal project, which will bring more jobs for Terrebonne and Lafourche. With this amendment, we level the playing field for the Port of Terrebonne and make it more likely the Corps will move forward with improving the HNC."

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